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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2009

In Today's Papers

Obama's Turkey Agenda (Milliyet)
Mainstream Milliyet today reports that, based on statements from experts and officials, U.S. President Barack Obama "plans to discuss Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan during his visit to Turkey." During a meeting at the Istanbul Cultural University on the topic of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, an unnamed American diplomat is quoted as saying, "Turkey is not seen as a model for the Islamic world," instead "Turkey is seen as a secular, democratic republic whose population is majority Muslim." Meanwhile, Milliyet also reports Prime Minister Erdogan's Chief Foreign Policy Advisor Ahmet Davutoglu is referring to the current honeymoon period in U.S.-Turkish relations as "an historic era of understanding" and Obama's decision to come to Turkey is "a mark of this historic era, this constructive and cooperative period." Regarding the Armenian Genocide Resolution, Davutoglu said "I am confident that the U.S. administration will not allow this issue to derail the positive turn in relations with Turkey." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries the front page headline, "Obama Will Ask For Troops" and the article predicts "Obama will come to Turkey to seek additional troops from Turkey for Afghanistan."

In a related article, leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports in "The U.S. Is Still Thinking," that "Representatives in the U.S. Congress have opined that it is a signal in and of itself that President Obama has taken no steps to try and block the AGR from moving forward."

Obama Gets Big Thumbs-Up from Turks ahead of Visit (Today's Zaman)
Islamist-oriented Zaman's English edition reports today that the Infakto Research Workshop in Istanbul conducted a poll in mid-February regarding Turks'

opinions of world leaders. U.S. President Barack Obama "tops the list of foreign leaders" in the poll with a 51.6 percent approval rating from Turks. 39.2 percent of those polled see Obama as a trustworthy leader, and 25.5 percent of those polled indicated they have a positive opinion of the United States. The poll also indicates that "Obama is viewed most favorably by voters aligned with the AKP." To read the full story, please visit:
<http://www.todayszaman.com/tzweb/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=170109>

Editorial Opinion on Obama's Visit to Turkey

Amberin Zaman wrote in leftist Taraf: "Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkish-Armenian relations, energy security and pipeline projects as well as Turkey's EU process and the Cyprus issue are the items on President Obama's agenda as he prepares for his official visit to Turkey. President Obama's stance regarding the Armenian Genocide Resolution has not yet been made clear. Thus, it would be very wise for Turkish leaders to step up relations with Armenia at this time. Regarding the fight against the PKK, Turkish-American cooperation has reached a level of perfection. There is also good working political will and coordination between Ankara, Erbil and Baghdad. The rhetoric in Turkey which claims the U.S. needs Turkey's help for the Iraq

ANKARA 00000423 002 OF 004

withdrawal is overly exaggerated. The U.S. is not exactly dependent on Turkey for its withdrawal from Iraq. This operation is already being carried out through Kuwait. Turkey's importance comes more in the form of logistical support and supply routes. When it comes to Afghanistan, there is a different picture. Things are not going well in Afghanistan, and Turkey may be asked for combat troops at any time."

Poll: AKP to Win Mayoral Elections in Istanbul, Ankara, CHP in Izmir
Media outlets report Sonar polling company conducted a public opinion survey, commissioned by the Alevi-owned Cem TV, ahead of the March 29 local elections. In Istanbul, the poll shows 50.1 percent of likely voters would vote for the AKP candidate Kadir Topbas and 33.1 percent would vote for CHP candidate Kemal Kilicdaroglu. In Ankara, the poll shows that 45.2 percent of likely voters would vote for the AKP's Melih Gokcek; 29.7 percent would vote for the CHP's Murat Karayalcin; and 22.5 percent would vote for the MHP's Mansur Yavas. In Izmir, the poll indicates 58 percent of the electorate will choose the CHP's candidate Aziz Kocaoglu and 25 percent will vote for the AKP candidate Taha Aksoy. The survey is based on interviews with 3814 people in Istanbul, 3382 in Ankara and 3314 in Izmir. The poll in Istanbul was completed two days ago; the polls in Ankara and Izmir were conducted two weeks ago.

TRT to Launch Arabic TV, Kurdish and Armenian Radios
Media outlets report the state-owned TRT broadcaster will launch a new TV channel in Arabic and new radio broadcasts in Kurdish and in Armenian. The new initiatives were announced Wednesday evening by Prime Minister Erdogan. Mainstream Aksam reports the new Kurdish radio, TRT Radyo Ses, will kick off broadcasts April 1, which will reach Iraq, Iran and Syria on FM. The new Arabic television, TRT-7 (or TRT Seb'a in Arabic) will cover the Middle East and the Arabian peninsula. Turkey's state broadcaster will also launch another television station called TRT Turk on March 21st, the beginning of Kurdish Nevruz festival. TRT

Turk will reach Central Asia. TRT's new radio in Armenian, to be launched following a decision adopted by the National Security Council (MGK,) will begin broadcasts in June, according to Aksam.

Editorial Opinion on the Kurdish Issue

Yasemin Congar wrote in leftist Taraf: "Jalal Talabani has made it official - the upcoming Kurdish conference in April will call on the PKK to lay down their arms. What happens after that is not clear yet. Ankara is afraid of using the word 'amnesty' and when asked about how to facilitate a return home, Turkish officials never give an answer that is sufficient to Kurds or to the rest of the world. We must think of amnesty as being the key to peace."

Frightening Confessions From Israel's 22-day Massacre (Yeni Safak)

Media outlets pay close attention to a recent article in the Israeli newspaper Hareetz that reported some Israeli soldiers said that they targeted civilians during the 22-day military operations earlier this year. Mainstream Hurriyet reports, "Some soldiers who took part in the 22 day offensive in Gaza are

ANKARA 00000423 003 OF 004

confessing that they killed defenseless Palestinian civilians." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet headlines, "Israeli Troops Confess to Killing Children and Elderly People During the Gaza Operations." Islamist-oriented Zaman headlines, "Israeli Soldiers Even Killed A Mother Who Was Lost, Along With Her Two Children." In "Confessions from Israeli Soldiers," leftist Taraf reports, "Israeli soldiers are confessing to killing defenseless civilians in Gaza."

An Ottoman Title Deed Finalizes Ownership Case Between Jews and Palestinians

Mainstream Hurriyet cites Israel's Haaretz newspaper in reporting that Palestinians in Turkey found a title deed in the Ottoman Empire archives which shows that a building in East Jerusalem belongs to Arabs, not to Israelis. During the last thirty years, there were ownership disagreements between Palestinians and Israelis over 30 buildings in Sheyh Cerrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. Haaretz newspaper noted that Palestinians might be able to remain in their houses if the Israeli court accepts this Ottoman deed as a sufficient evidence.

Editorial Opinion on Security Issues between Iran and Israel; NATO Summit

Mehmet Yilmaz wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles to Israel during the 1990s Gulf War. However, right after the 2003 American invasion, Iraq lost its ability to be a military threat against Israel. Iran, on the other hand, remains very capable of posing a military threat against Israel. Given the tense atmosphere in the region, it looks as if Iran and Israel are preparing for war. A recent report by the American group CSIS may shed light on what may happen - the report claims Israel may use its long-range Jericho missiles to strike Iran."

Ferai Tinc wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "The differences between the U.S. and the EU over Iraq are over and NATO has entered a new era as it reaches its 60th birthday. NATO remains an indispensable security structure of the Western alliance. In the near future, Afghanistan will be the major focus for the organization."

ANCA: Turkey Is Trying to Divide Armenia from the

Armenian Diaspora

Liberal Radikal and leftist Taraf report Ken Hachikian, president of the American National Committee of Armenians (ANCA), claims Turkey "is trying to divide Armenia from the Armenian Diaspora in America." The day after the Armenian lobby in the U.S. submitted a bill on the events of 1915 to the U.S. Congress, Hachikian blamed Turkey for trying to "spoil" the ties between Armenia and the Armenians Diaspora, and called on the American Armenians to donate money to ANCA as a "contribution to the common cause," report papers.

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- On Saturday, Nevruz, a Kurdish festival celebrating the arrival of spring, will be held around Turkey. The celebrations in Ankara will be held on Sunday.
- On the eve of municipal elections, irregularities were reported in Diyarbakir regarding the distribution

ANKARA 00000423 004 OF 004

of social aid to needy families, with the claims that there were many children and deceased people on the list of aid recipients.

- Ankara objects to the pro-Kurdish DTP suggestion that the PKK should join the Kurdish conference to be held in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil in April.
- Industry Minister Zafer Caglayan says in April, his government will announce "new incentives" favoring the automotive sector.

World

- 88 percent of Azerbaijani voters support a constitutional amendment removing a two-term limit on the presidency.
- Turkish Cyprus leader Mehmet Ali Talat is expected to meet with Secretary Clinton in Washington on March 30.
- Reporters Without Borders says Umidriza Mirsayafi, an Iranian blogger convicted of insulting the country's ruling clerics, has died in Tehran's main prison.
- Police have started installing closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras throughout the Iranian capital to lower crime rates.

JEFFREY